

Explanation of Demand #1

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What is divestment?

Divestment is the bare minimum

- In 2019, Midd was one of the first institutions in the country to begin divestment from fossil fuels. As a community, we asked ourselves, how is it possible to claim that we are preparing students to be the future leaders of the world and tackling the greatest problems of our generation, when the endowment that funds this very education **profits off of creating these same problems** through fossil fuel investments.
- Divestment, which means both ending investment in particular companies and setting policies in place to ensure no future investments in certain companies, **is never easy**. Midd Divest, the original fossil fuel divestment group started in 2011, **fought tooth and nail for 8 years** to get that divestment win. Students were threatened with disciplinary action, some faculty members wrote hit piece Op Ed's in the Middlebury Campus literally against individual members of Divest, and the overall administrative position was to **resist the movement for as long as possible** until it was no longer feasible to refuse the demands.
- We also know that divesting from a genocide is not new. In 2006, after the Sudanese government began its human rights violations in Darfur, Middlebury College divested from companies that were aiding and abetting that regime. This decision was not made easily, and Middlebury tried to make sure they would not lose too much money. **The administration will always revise history to make it look like they supported divestment all along.**
- When we are talking about divestment from Israel, we are really talking about divestment from companies that substantially profit off of war. This is not just arms manufacturers and defense contractors, but companies like **Elbit systems**, which provides military electronics. Additionally, **Caterpillar**, the same construction company whose equipment is helping build Battell II **right now**, the same equipment which is **currently destroying the encampment at Columbia**, sells the IDF bulldozers that **demolish Palestinian homes**.
- **Go to these sites for specifics of our vision of divestment on war profiteering:**
 - <https://wri-irg.org/en/war-profiteering-and-co>

- <https://bdsmovement.net/call>
- <https://investigate.afsc.org/divest>

Why divestment?

Because it's what Palestinians have been asking of us **for decades**.

- In 2005, over 170 major institutions of Palestinian civil society in Palestine, West Bank, Gaza, and the Diaspora called upon people of conscience all over the world to impose boycotts, divestments, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, the same type of **measures that worked to topple the South African apartheid regime**.
- These *non-violent* measures of Boycotts, Divestments, and Sanctions should be maintained until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination by:
- BDS mirrors their strategy on the South African apartheid divestment, and we know that in 1986, **Middlebury College students also worked tirelessly** to have our college be one of the 155 in the country to **divest from that oppressive regime**. This is not about Jews. This is not about Israelis. This is about apartheid regimes, and equal rights. If you care about opposing the genocide in Gaza, if you care about humanity, history calls upon you!

What is the endowment?

- Our college, like many others in this country, controls unfathomable amounts of wealth while denying its students and employees the resources we need and deserve. The primary vault for this wealth is the College Endowment, worth almost 1.5 billion dollars.
- There is no policy in place to ensure that the college won't just purchase shares in companies that profit off of war, once they deem it worthwhile.
- We had to ask the administration to do an audit of these investments to tell us that right now, they just so coincidentally do not invest in any arms manufacturing. And these investments only make up 20% percent of the endowment. The remaining 80% of the endowment has ZERO financial transparency. We know from other schools that these top-secret investments utilize high risk investment strategies to maximize rewards. We know from around the country that it is often these off-the-books investment practices that are most complicit with the most egregious regimes and actors in the world.

- And let's be real, we even made a 6 page document outlining an exact process for how Middlebury could screen their investments called ["Recommending Divestment from Companies that Profit off of War."](#) And yet, we hear radio silence.
- We went through the school and got a small boycott win with Starbucks. Starbucks profits at the college were thousands of dollars a year, but now we are talking about over a billion dollars of the endowment that aren't financially transparent. The administration threw us a crumb, and they thought we would forget, or even better for them, surrender.